

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00
PM-03 ACDA-10 L-01 PRS-01 SP-02 TRSE-00 MC-01
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INFO ALL NATO CAPITALS
USNMR SHAPE
USCINCEUR
USLOSACLANT
USDOCOSOUTH
JCS WASHDC
CSAF WASHDC
CINCUSAFE
AFSC ANDREWS AFB MD
ESD HANSCOM FLD MASS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 USNATO 1747

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: NATO, AWACS, OCON
SUBJECT: WHITHER AND WHETHER: COMMENT ON DPC MINISTERIAL
MEETING, MARCH 25, 1977

REF: A. USNATO 1727 DTG 251937Z MAR 77 (NOTAL)
B. USNATO 1732 DTG 252114Z MAR 77 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH THE MARCH 25 DPC MINISTERIAL MEETING
KEPT ALIVE A NATO AEW PROGRAM BASED ON AWACS, AND
ALTHOUGH IT REVEALED MINISTERIAL RESOLVE TO ACHIEVE
AN ALLIANCE-WIDE PROGRAM, WE BELIEVE THAT THE UK MAY
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YET ANNOUNCE THAT IT WILL DEVELOP ITS OWN NATIONAL
FORCE BASED ON NIMROD. IN THIS EVENT, ALLIANCE RESOLVE
MAY TURN QUICKLY INTO ALLIANCE FRUSTRATION AND AN
INCLINATION TO REGARD AEW FOR THE OTHER ALLIES AS A DEAD
ISSUE. THE FRG, WHILE POSITIVE DURING THE MINISTERIAL
MEETING, STILL FACES SUBSTANTIAL INTERNAL OBSTACLES, WE
BELIEVE, WHICH MAY DELAY OR EVEN PROHIBIT FRG PARTICIPATION.
THUS, WE BELIEVE IT IS FAR FROM WELL AND THAT ONLY
TIMELY US LEADERSHIP CAN GIVE IT A NEW LEASE ON LIFE,
SHOULD THE UK GO IT ALONE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE UNEXPECTED RESULT OF THE DPC MINISTERIAL MEETING ON NATO AEW, MARCH 25, 1977, IS SUMMARIZED IN THE COMMUNIQUE (REF A). THIS MESSAGE EXPANDS UPON OUR INITIAL COMMENT (REF B), FORWARDED IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE MEETING.

2. VIRTUALLY THE ENTIRE MINISTERIAL DISCUSSION CONCENTRATED ON THE ISSUE OF THE UK'S REPEATED INSISTENCE THAT IT COULD SUPPORT AN AWACS REPEAT AWACS AEW FORCE ONLY IF A FIRM ALLIANCE DECISION COULD BE TAKEN PRIOR TO APRIL 1, 1977, AND ON THE INABILITY OR UNWILLINGNESS OF SEVERAL ALLIES TO MEET THIS SCHEDULE. WHILE THIS FOCUS SERVED TO ILLUMINATE SOME ISSUES, IT ALSO CONCEALED OTHERS, AS DISCUSSED BELOW. ADDITIONALLY, IT MAY HAVE CONDITIONED THE ATTITUDE OF SEVERAL ALLIES IN A WAY TO MAKE SUCCESS MORE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE SHOULD THE UK OPT FOR A NIMROD "CONTRIBUTION" TO AEW.

3. ALL MINISTERS UNDERSTOOD CLEARLY THAT UK MINISTER MULLEY'S CAREFULLY WORDED STATEMENT RESERVING HIS GOVERNMENT'S POSITION (PARA 3, REF A) WAS DESIGNED TO PRESERVE THE UK'S ABILITY TO OPT FOR NIMROD. WE BELIEVE THERE IS A VERY GOOD CHANCE THAT THE UK WILL DO JUST THAT, AND THAT IT WILL DO SO VERY SOON. WE ARE NOT SANGUINE THAT THE US CAN INDUCE THE UK TO DO OTHERWISE, PARTICULARLY SINCE
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THE BENEFITS OF ANY INDUCEMENTS WE MIGHT OFFER WOULD NECESSARILY BE IN THE FUTURE, WHEREAS ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF FULL NIMROD DEVELOPMENT CAN BE REALIZED QUICKLY. MOREOVER, CANCELLING NIMROD WOULD GIVE RISE TO IMMEDIATE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC COSTS THAT THE CALLAGHAN GOVERNMENT MAY NOT BE WILLING OR ABLE TO BEAR.

4. SHOULD THE UK DECIDE TO "MAKE ITS CONTRIBUTION" TO NATO AEW BY ALLOCATING SOME NUMBER OF NIMRODS TO ANY FUTURE NATO FORCE, AND TO MAKE SUCH A CONTRIBUTION OPERATIONALLY LOGICAL BY ASSURING ALLIES THAT NIMROD WILL BE FULLY INTEROPERABLE WITH AWACS, A NUMBER OF SMALLER ALLIES WILL FIND THEMSELVES STRIPPED OF THE ARGUMENT WHICH PERSUADED THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE TO SUPPORT THE NATO FORCE BASED ON AWACS: THE ARGUMENT THAT, QUITE APART FROM ITS MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS, - SINGLE SYSTEM NATO AEW FORCE WOULD SERVE AS A SYMBOL OF THE POLITICAL COHESION OF THE ALLIANCE, IT WAS THE FORCEFUL REITERATION OF THIS ARGUMENT, BY CANADIAN MINISTER DANSON AND OTHERS, THAT TURNED INITIALLY UNFOCUSED DPC DELIBERATION DURING THE MINISTERIAL MEETING INTO A RESOLVE -- INCOMPLETE AND IMPERFECT, BUT STILL RESOLVE -- TO ACHIEVE AN AWACS FORCE.

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5. FAR FROM BELIEVING THAT THIS ARGUMENT FOR ALLIANCE SOLIDARITY IS EITHER SPECIOUS OR MISLEADING, WE GIVE IT GREAT WEIGHT, AND HAVE REPEATEDLY USED IT OURSELVES IN URGING ALLIES TO SUPPORT THE AWACS-BASED PROGRAM. BUT THIS GIVES US ALL THE MORE CONCERN ABOUT THE PROBABLE ALLIED REACTION SHOULD THE UK OPT FOR NIMROD. HAVING AGREED -- MOST RELUCTANTLY, IN MANY INSTANCES -- TO SUPPORT A SINGLE SYSTEM SOLUTION, MANY ALLIES WILL FIND IT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO TURN QUICKLY AND IN A POSITIVE FRAME OF MIND TO EXAMINE THE ALTERNATIVE OR AN INTEGRATED AEW FORCE USING TWO SYSTEMS.

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6. OUR BEST INFORMATION IS THAT A MIXED FORCE OF NIMROD AND AWACS, WHILE NOT AS EFFECTIVE AS A FORCE OF AWACS ALONG AND SURELY NOT AS FLEXIBLE IN ITS EMPLOYMENT, CAN DO THE JOB. IF THE NEED TO COUNTER LOW LEVER AERIAL PENETRATION IS REAL, AS IT SURELY IS, THEN COUNTERING IT IN ANY WAY IS BETTER THAN FAILURE TO MEET IT AT ALL. BUT THIS STARK FACT, WE BELIEVE, MAY BE LOST ON MANY ALLIES, AT LEAST INITIALLY, IN THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT SHOULD THE CREATION OF A SINGLE SYSTEM FORCE NO LONGER

PROVE POSSIBLE. GIVEN THE PAINFUL TASK FACING ALL ALLIES (EXCEPT THE UK) IN REORDERING PRIORITIES TO ACCOMMODATE NATO AEW, WE EXPECT THAT THERE WILL BE A DISTINCT INCLINATION IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES EVEN TO AVOID FURTHER EXAMINATION OF THE SUBJECT.

7. SHOULD THIS SITUATION EVOLVE, WE BELIEVE THAT PROMPT AND POSITIVE US LEADERSHIP WILL BE REQUIRED TO REVIVIFY NATO AEW. WE RECOGNIZE THE UNDERSTANDABLE RELUCTANCE TO PLAN FOR THE WORST WHILE ONE IS STILL HOPING FOR THE BEST, BUT WE BELIEVE THAT THE PROBABILITY OF THE UK DECIDING TO DEVELOP ITS OWN NATIONAL FORCE IS SUFFICIENTLY HIGH THAT SERIOUS CONTINGENCY PLANNING IS NOW REQUIRED. AS WASHINGTON KNOWS WELL, THE ACQUISITION SHORTFALL ALREADY FACING THE ALLIANCE, TO MAKE UP FOR LESS THAN HOPED-FOR CONTRIBUTIONS BY FRANCE, ITALY, DENMARK, AND PERHAPS GREECE, CONSTITUTES A MAJOR UNSOLVED PROBLEM. THIS PROBLEM WILL BE SERIOUSLY EXACERBATED, WE BELIEVE, SHOULD THE UK DECIDE TO GO IT ALONE WHILE DRESSING UP ITS DECISION IN TERMS OF NATO INTEROPERABILITY.

8. FINALLY, WE NOTE THAT MINISTER LEBER'S STATEMENTS DURING THE MINISTERIAL MEETING, WHILE MOVING THE FRG TO A QUALIFIED "YES", MAY YET HAVE CONCEALED AS MUCH AS THEY REVEALED. LEBER MENTIONED, FOR EXAMPLE, AN FRG SHARE OF 20 PERCENT DURING ONE INTERVENTION IN WHICH HE CONFIDENTIAL

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WAS ATTEMPTING TO DEMONSTRATE THE IMPORTANCE OF FRENCH PARTICIPATION. THE FACT IS WELL KNOWN THAT WE HAVE NOT YET DETERMINED WHAT SHARE THE FRG IS WILLING TO CONTRIBUTE. THE FACT THAT WE ARE BACK IN SQUARE ONE IF THE FRG INTENDS TO HOLD FIRM AT OR NEAR 20 PERCENT SHOULD BE NO LESS CLEAR.

9. WE HAVE LONG BELIEVED THAT LEBER FACES TWO DIFFICULT, INTERRELATED INTERNAL PROBLEMS, BOTH OF WHICH REMAIN UNALTERED BY RECENT EVENTS AND MEETINGS: A) FINDING A WAY TO FUND AEW WITHOUT THREATENING OTHER MAJOR PROCUREMENTS ALREADY PLANNED (E.G. MRCA, LEOPARD II) AND THEREBY INCURRING THE ACTIVE OPPOSITION OF AN ALREADY RESTIVE MILITARY WITH INFLUENCE IN THE BUNDESTAGE; AND B) CONVINCING DOUBTERS IN AND OUT OF UNIFORM THAT AEW REALLY OFFERS AN EFFECTIVE RETURN FOR THE INVESTMENT REQUIRED.

10. FOR THESE REASONS, WE BELIEVE THAT THE TARGET DATE MINISTERS ESTABLISHED FOR AGREEMENT ON AN AEW SYSTEM, AND TO WHICH LEBER RELUCTANTLY AGREED, MAY NOT BE COMPLETELY REALISTIC IN TERMS OF HIS ABILITY TO DELIVER IN BONN. SINCE A NATO PROGRAM WOULD NOT BE CONCEIVABLE WITHOUT FRG PARTICIPATION, WE BELIEVE

THAT THE US SHOULD BEGIN NOW TO ASSESS WAYS IN WHICH
AGREEMENT ON A NATO AEW PROGRAM COULD BE DEFERRED FOR
AS MUCH AS A YEAR, OR EVEN LONGER, SHOULD THIS BE
NECESSARY TO SECURE FRG PARTICIPATION.

11. WE WOULD WELCOME WASHINGTON VIEWS ON THIS COMMENT
AND EARLY GUIDANCE FOR USE HERE, PARTICULARLY SHOULD
THE UK CHOOSE NIMROD IN THE NEAR FUTURE. STRAUSSZ-HUPE

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